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ABSTRACT

Three do-it-yourself intelligence test handbooks, five mini-textbooks, and five consumer protection guides are reviewed. Each type of publication reflects different social ideologies and communicates favorable, cautiously neutral, or critical messages, respectively, about testing. Psychologists Jules Leopold, Martin Lutterjohan, and Victor Serebriakoff describe their own intelligence tests in the do-it-yourself books. All share the premise that parents can test and raise their childrens' intelligence quotients. This premise violates professional standards advocating administration of such tests by qualified personnel. The authors, furthermore, do not fully explain the development, rationale and validation of their tests. The mini-textbooks, by the Educational Records Bureau, U.S. Office of Education, National School Public Relations Association, Association of American Publishers and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, stress that standardized testing is important, but are vague as to why. There are no sample items in the mini-textbooks. The consumer protection guides stress that schools do not adequately explain test results to parents, who should have access to test content, in order for them to judge or to challenge tests. The most ambitious consumer guide is Charlotte Ryan's "The Testing Maze.", published by the National Parents Teachers Association. (CP)

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NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON TESTING

STAFF CIRCULAR No. 5

A REVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS ON TESTING FOR PARENTS AND THE PUBLIC*

April 1979

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Walt Haney
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This is the fifth of a series of staff circulars which have been distributed as part of the Huron Institute's staff work for the National Consortium on Testing. This circular is intended to spur discussion on the topic of information available to parents and to the public on the subject of testing and to raise important issues worthy of additional attention, not to resolve them. It is produced primarily as a resource document for member organizations of the NCT. Although the circular has been prepared as part of the staff work of Huron for the Consortium, it does not necessarily reflect the views of the NCT nor of individual NCT members.

The author would like to thank Mary Arsenoff, Corinne Scott, Parker Damon, Margaret Corey, James Ricks, Emily Cahan, and Elinor Woods for comments and information helpful in preparing this paper. The paper does not, of course, necessarily reflect their views nor the views of anyone other than the author.

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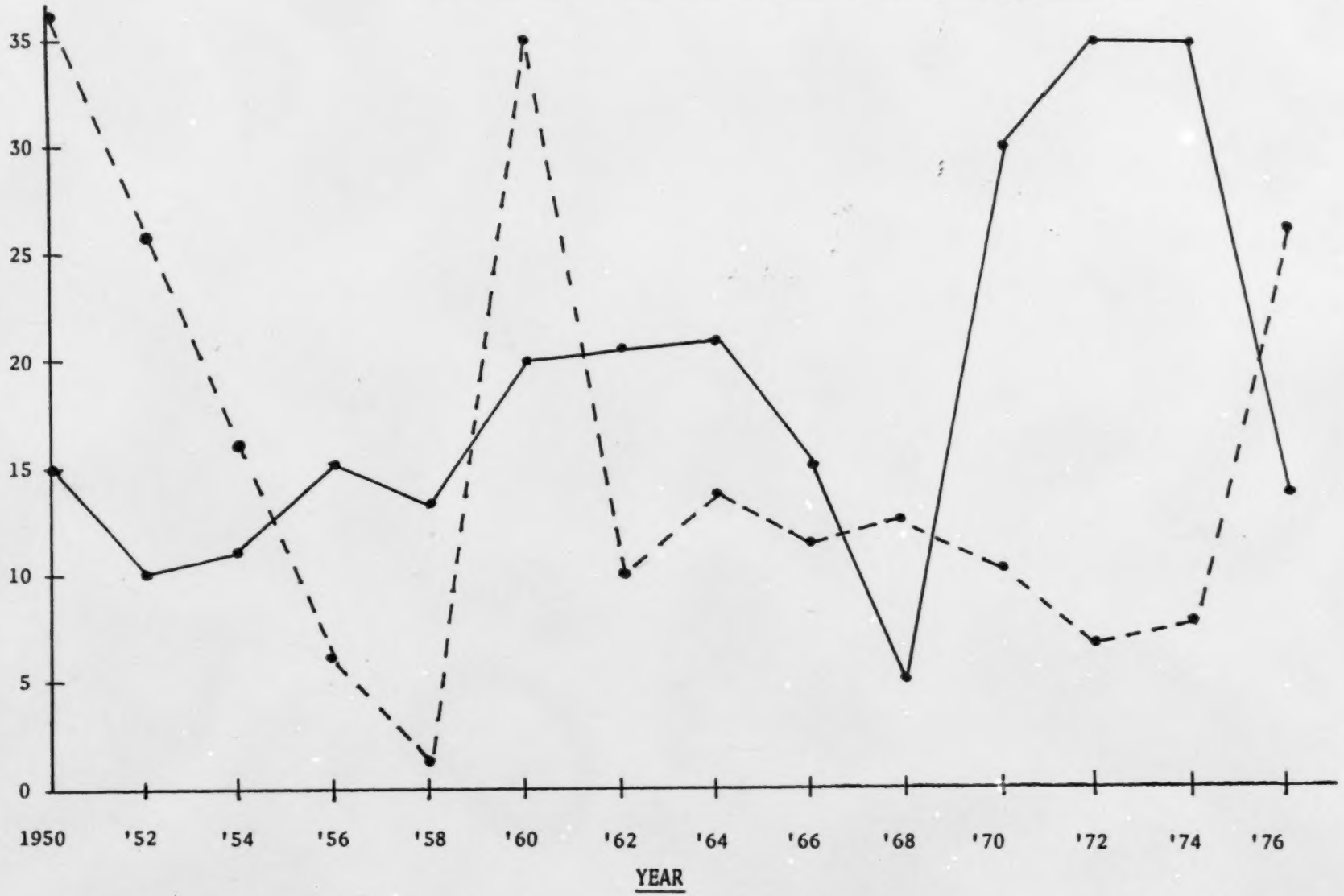
I. Introduction

> Every few months the popular magazines run articles dealing with standardized tests. Magazines aimed at the home and family living have also established this topic as a regular -- along with such sure-fire repeaters as dieting and how to cut down on income taxes. (Martin Haberman, 1979)

As Haberman suggests, information on standardized testing seems to be a popular commodity. Figure 1 depicts data reflecting the ebb and flow of public interest in testing as represented in popular periodicals. Specifically this figure shows the number of articles in periodicals of general interest indexed in the Reader's Guide as dealing with "educational tests and measurement" and "intelligence quotient/intelligence tests." As indices of public interest in particular topics, these data must be reviewed with some skepticism (see Note 1), but still they do correspond well with patterns of recent history. The peak of interest in educational tests and measurement generally, around 1960, coincided with both an increase in testing and increased criticism of standardized testing.* The high number of articles on IQ and intelligence tests in the early 1970s corresponded with intensified controversy over intelligence testing and the heritability of intelligence. And the upswing of interest in testing apparent in 1976 seems to reflect both renewal of controversy over standardized testing and increased testing, including minimum competency testing.

*The National Defense Education Act of 1958 provided funds for increased standardized testing by school systems around this time. Also around this time, there was an increase in college admissions tests (connected with both the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the American College Test). At the same time, there was intensified public criticism of standardizing testing -- perhaps most notably represented in a 1961 article by Banesh Hoffmann in Harpers Magazine, and his expanded critique of standardized testing in the Tyranny of Testing (1962).

Figure 1: Annual Number of Entries on Testing in Reader's Guide, 1950-76*



*Number of (bi-annual) entries in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature on "Educational Tests and Measurement" (— — —), and "Intelligence Quotient/Intelligence Tests" (———). See Note 1.

Source: Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Volumes 17 (1951) through 37 (1978).

Yet despite wide and continuing press coverage given to standardized testing, the proposition that parents and the public should be better educated about the strengths and weaknesses of standardized testing, seems to have exceptionally wide adherence. Numerous organizations are involved in one manner or another in public education on testing. One of the purposes of the National Consortium on Testing is to promote public understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of standardized tests. The National Council on Educational Measurement seeks as one of its ongoing functions to educate test users. The National Parent Teacher Association has just developed a "white paper" on standardized testing for its members (Ryan, 1979). The American Federation of Teachers has recently received a $140,000 grant from the National Institute of Education (NIE) to develop materials and hold conferences on standardized tests so that teachers might better understand and use them. And the NIE itself is sponsoring in 1979 a series of regional meetings to promote better understanding of standardized testing and its role in education.

The public seems to reciprocate this interest in testing. Specific incidents concerning testing, such as the SAT score decline and the Bakke decision, arouse powerful public passions. Even apart from such specific cases there appears to be widespread interest in standardized testing in general. In 1977, the Consumer Information Center (CIC) of the General Services Administration sponsored a nationwide survey of public interest in possible government publications. Among twenty pamphlet titles, one on testing ranked number four in public interest, behind "Wills, Estates, and Inheritance Tax," "Keeping Records--What to Discard," and almost even with "Removing Stains from Fabrics" (Bruskin, 1977). Interest in the testing booklet was substantially greater than in one on "Vegetarian Diets" and

twice as great as in a potential publication entitled "Group Therapy." On the basis of this survey a CIC official estimates that "the testing publication should be very popular with consumers" (Arsenoff, 1978). As a result, the CIC is attempting to develop a brief booklet on testing for publication by the federal government. So far two drafts of the booklet have been prepared but since neither was judged satisfactory, yet a third is being written.

Despite the difficulty which the CIC is having in developing a booklet on testing for the American public, there is a fairly long history of publication of such material. The purpose of this paper is to review previously developed information on testing for parents and the public. This will serve the fairly simple aim of letting readers know what material of this sort is already available. Also, however, the review will try to analyze why there appears to be such continuing widespread interest in public education on standardized testing. As we will see, this effort will reveal some of the causes behind the CIC's difficulties in getting its booklet on testing written.

Specifically, in the text of this paper I review a dozen booklets and articles designed to provide information on testing to the general public or to parents. The documents reviewed have been identified through personal contacts and by reviewing several bibliographies on testing (Buros, 1972, 1978; Backer, 1977). Additional materials not explicitly reviewed are mentioned in footnotes.

All materials reviewed might be construed as information on tests specifically designed for parents or the public generally. However, excluded from this review are some specific sorts of educational materials on standardized tests--for example, newspaper and magazine articles of the sort mentioned by Haberman; commercial test preparation guides which have

been fairly widely available since the 1950s; material on tests for special segments of the public (e.g., specific ethnic groups or parents of handicapped children), and introductory textbooks on testing which generally appear not to have been widely distributed, though theoretically of course they are available through any bookstore.

Even though the domain of materials on testing treated in this paper is thus fairly restricted, we find among those materials located three distinct types. For convenience, and for the sake of discussion, I label the three types as:

-- do-it-yourself test documents,

-- mini-textbook materials, and

-- consumer protection guides.

These three types of materials tend to be written by very different types of people, to convey very different messages about tests, and to specify very different courses of action for consumers of tests to follow. Oddly, however, there are also some unexpected similarities among them. These three different types of information on standardized tests for parents and the public are discussed in the following three sections of this paper. The last section concludes with some overall observations on the social meaning of these diverse materials and messages on testing.

II. Do-It-Yourself Test Documents

Three books which might be labelled do-it-yourself test materials are briefly described in Table 1.* These materials clearly are written by enthusiasts of standardized testing. Authors of the documents are presented as authorities on testing of one sort or another. The blurb on Test Yourself

*Other documents of this variety are Eysenck (1966); and Adams (1976a, 1976b).

Table 1: Do-It-Yourself Documents

Bernard, William and Leopold, Jules
Test Yourself. A Handbook Based on Modern Psychological Methods.
Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1962 (fourth ed.), 99 pages. Price: $3.50.

Format: Paperback book

Address: Chilton Book Company, Radnor, PA

Contents:

Introduction, p. 1

Section One: General Intelligence, p. 8

Contains tests of IQ, adaptability, perception, concentration, memory, inferential reasoning and problem solving.

Section Two: Skills and Talents, p. 32

Contains tests of musical talent, mathematical reasoning, anticipation, and ability to foresee, spatial imagery and reasoning, inventiveness, lying, esthetic judgment, artistic talent, and imagination.

Section Three: Personality, p. 54

Contains tests of reliability, attitudes in love, social skills, happiness, ability to follow complex directions, judgment, decisiveness, thoroughness, attitudes toward marriage, leadership, analytical ability, and ingeniousness.

Section Four: Job Aptitudes, p. 78

Contains tests of mechanical ability, pattern-coping, motor ability, and dexterity.

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Lutterjohan, Martin
IQ Tests for Children. How to Test Your Child's IQ. New York: Stein and Day, 1978, 179 pages. Price: $4.95

Format: Paperbound book, originally published in German, 1976.

Address: Stein and Day Publishers
Scarborough House
Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510

Contents:

I. Preparation for the Test, p. 1
--What You're Getting Into, p. 1
--What Really is Intelligence? p. 3
--What you should Know About Intelligence Tests and the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), p. 5
--About the Tests, p. 9
--Hints for Successful Testing, p. 12

II. The Intelligence Test, p. 17
--(Series of tests for youngsters from infancy to age seven)

Table 1: Do-It-Yourself Documents (Cont'd)

III. Intelligence Training, p. 131

--(Twelve sections describing "Basic Training" concerning "how you can develop your child's intelligence" in areas of language, concept of numbers, space perceptions and memory.)

IV. Appendix

--Brief Survey of the Child's General Development During the First Six Years, p. 169
--Some Disturbances of Development and Behavioral Disorders, p. 175

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Serebriakoff, Victor and Langer, Dr. Steven. Test Your Child's IQ. New York: David McKay, 1977, 123 pages. Price: $8.95.

Format: Spiral bound book

Address: David McKay Company
750 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Contents:

Part One: The Part You Must Read
1. Why you should want to know, p. 3
2. Intelligence: What is it? p. 8
3. How do we measure human intelligence? p. 18
4. Giving the Test, p. 29
(pp. 32-67 contain a 55-question test plus instructions and tables for scoring and interpreting results).

Part Two: The Part You Should Read: The Other Side of the Question
5. Are IQ Tests Immoral? Have They Been Debunked? p. 73
6. What to do About the Gifted Child, p. 84
7. What to do About the Retarded, p. 97.
8. Does Intelligence Run in Families? p. 106
9. The Mental Resources of Humanity, p. 115

Appendix: (List of American Psychological Association State Association Secretaries, 1976), p. 118

describes Jules Leopold as an "authority on testing for twenty years." "William Bernard" is the pseudonym of a husband-wife team. The wife is said to be "long a professor of education at a prominent university [and] has written extensively on gifted children and adults, on guidance practices, and in various other psychological areas." One cannot help but wonder what motivation there is behind this odd state of affairs -- claiming authority for authors who wish to remain anonymous.

Martin Lutterjohan, author of IQ Test for Children, is a psychologist, apparently German, as his book is translated from an original German version. Authors of the third do-it-yourself test book present an even more unusual set of credentials. Both are members of Mensa -- a social club for individuals "at the level of the top two percent on an intelligence test" (p. 6). Serebriakoff wrote the text of Test Your Child's IQ and Langer prepared the IQ test presented in the book.

Common to all three of these do-it-yourself test books is the premise that readers can successfully test their own or their children's intelligence quotient. The Test Yourself book includes not just an IQ test, but also some thirty other tests of attributes ranging from adaptability to skill in love. Truly it is a book for the test happy.

The idea of do-it-yourself IQ testing, if taken seriously, seems questionable on its surface. And indeed the publication of these books would seem to fly in the face of the joint APA, AERA, and NCME Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests, specifically essential standard G3:

> One who has the responsibility for decisions about individuals or policies that are based on test results should have an understanding of psychological or educational measurement and of validation and other test research. (APA, AERA & NCME, 1974, p. 59)

Moreover, these do-it-yourself tests appear to be in violation of the APA (1977) Ethical Principles of Psychologists which stipulates:

> When a test is published or otherwise made available for operational use, it is accompanied by a manual (or other published or readily available information) that fully describes the development of the test, the rationale, and evidence of reliability and validity. (p. 6)*

On all counts the do-it-yourself test books are surely lacking. Serebriakoff and Langer report that their test was developed with the cooperation of Illinois school officials and tested [validated?] by having both high-IQ Mensa members and mentally retarded high school students take it. Curiously, however, Serebriakoff and Langer's book gives the reader a sense of professional propriety because it recounts findings of psychological research (but with few exact references) and lists in an appendix the state secretaries of the American Psychological Association (pp. 118-120).

Lutterjohan provides absolutely no detail on how his intelligence tests were developed or normed and provides no information whatever on their reliability or validity. He states simply:

> I very carefully designed all tests [in this book] in such a way that only questions are used that do not differ from other intelligence tests either in the degree of difficulty or in their formulation. The standard I used is one that places these tests pretty much in the middle range of tests widely used in psychological practice. (p. 9)

Bernard and Leopold provide only slightly more information:

> The [IQ] examination shows a retest reliability of .87 and in no case has failed to correlate at least .81 with Stanford-Binet, Kuhlman, Terman, and other Binet-type scales, including the Dominion (group) and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales. Mental age equivalents . . . were derived through statistical comparison of scores achieved by the same individual on the tests mentioned and the one given here. (p. 8)

*Similar language is contained in essential standard A1 of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests (APA, AERA, & NCME, 1974, pp. 9-10).

However, for the other thirty tests provided in their book, Bernard and Leopold provide no information at all on rationale, methods of construction or technical quality.

Why then were these do-it-yourself test books published? Bernard and Leopold say that their tests "allow you to look at yourself through science-tinted glasses . . . [and allow you to] gain an insight into the testing methods relied upon more and more by government agencies, universities, institutions, and private industry throughout the United States" (p. 5). Lutterjohan suggests that his book's main purpose is to allow parents to satisfy their curiosity "to determine the IQ of your children by applying the questions and tests appropriate to their ages" (p. 1), and also to provide "suggestions about how you can stimulate the development of your child's intelligence" (p. 131).

Serebriakoff gives much more explanation as to why Test Your Child's IQ was written:

> The purpose of this book is to provide parents with better information that will help them to make better judgments and, ultimately, better decisions.
>
> It is more important than ever before for parents to have the information necessary to make the best judgments. Some authorities who might be expected to provide this information are reluctant to do so. Many psychologists, for instance, will not tell parents the results of intelligence and aptitude tests because they hold (wrongly, I believe) that parents cannot be trusted with this information. Teachers, doctors, and social workers as well sometimes subscribe to the doctrine that "we know best," suggesting that they alone are equipped to properly interpret and use such test results.
>
> It is principally this outlook that has persuaded us to make available an intelligence test designed specifically for the use of parents. (p. 4)

The author goes on to bemoan "a decline in the quality of the educational system, which may have been caused by ideologies influencing it, opposition to the idea of selection, or trends toward indiscriminate or so-called 'open' education" (p. 6). In later chapters of the book, Serebriakoff defends intelligence tests against their debunkers. With irrefutable logic he contends "If IQ tests have been successfully debunked and are acknowledged to be of no value, then it logically follows that they cannot be really immoral since they would be ignored" (p. 73). In a closing chapter on the "Mental Resources of Humanity," Serebriakoff advises:

> Parents who want to realize a good future for their children and their children's children can best do this by making sure that their children fulfill their potential so that they can be of the most service to society. The parents whose problem and privilege it is to have a gifted child have an even more urgent task and duty because it is from these children that we must recruit those who can lead the rest of us.
>
> To be deflected by false egalitarians, an unthinking "sense of fairness," compensationitis, and the tides of uninstructed public opinion is to be the enemy of the people of tomorrow. And educators should stop trying to be social reformers and return to the task of helping children to acquire the academic skills they need to reap the harvests of our rich cultural heritage. . . .
>
> The idea that every man shall have equal rights -- that all men are legally, morally, and socially equal -- is an essential element of any humane society. But the extension of this idea -- that all men are in reality equal, that there is a kind of international standard man to which we all conform -- is one of the more extreme ideas of Rousseau. It is a comic idea, and it is comic that it is taken seriously. But the consequences of taking it seriously and of trying to formulate educational policy in its light are not comic, they are tragic. They constitute an abandonment of that essential ethic of Western society's success, the doctrine of "the best man for the job." (pp. 116-117)

In sum, these do-it-yourself test materials represent a curious mix. In part they seem to represent pop-psychology for profit. Also, however, they are part of a long American tradition of popular primers for parents. As Alison Clarke-Stewart observed recently, "Giving advice to parents is big business these days, and new 'experts' are springing up everywhere" (1978, p. 339). Several social trends--including geographic mobility and age stratification--appear to be exacerbating the trend toward parental reliance on "expert" advice. But these do-it-yourself test books share a malady common to the broader literature of popular primers for parents--namely a "lack of evidence offered as a basis for the expert's recommendations" (Clarke-Stewart, 1978, p. 367).

At the same time, the do-it-yourself tests are tinged with strong ideological overtones; a peculiar social conservatism which holds that given these tools of science--or more accurately scientism--parents will better be able to raise their children. The three books' authors seem to agree that standardized testing is on the increase, but their interpretations of the trend are somewhat different. Bernard and Leopold's do-it-yourself tests are aimed at making people more familiar with these instruments which are increasingly relied upon. But Serebriakoff and Langer more actively attempt to put in the hands of parents IQ test results for their children in order to combat the withholding of such information from parents by institutions and authorities beset, in these authors' view, by forces of false egalitarianism.

III. Mini-Textbook Materials

Table 2 describes five documents on testing which can be called mini-textbook materials.* These materials, unlike the do-it-yourself test documents

*Other documents apparently in this vein are Hunt (1965) and Kandel (1968); but I have not been able to locate copies of either. One other document clearly of this type is Spack and Streit (1978). Klein's mini-textbook, Psychological Testing of Children (1977), (focusing on individualized testing) carries a little of the flavor of a consumer protection guide.

Table 2. Mini-Textbook Materials on Testing

Corey, Margaret T.
Parent's Guide to Understanding Tests.
Framingham, MA: Educational Records Bureau, 1975, 23 pages. Price: $2.00 (plus 50¢ for mailing, and 20¢ for nonmembers.)

Format: Booklet, mainly text, but with two illustrations

Address: Educational Records Bureau
2 Sun Life Executive Park
100 Worcester Road
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181

Contents:

--Foreword, p. 3
--Introduction, p. 5
--Types of Standardized Tests, p. 7
--Schoolwide Testing Programs, p. 12
--Admissions Testing, p. 16
--Some Common Abbreviations of Test Titles, p. 20
--Principal Testing Programs, p. 21
--Glossary of Testing Terms, p. 22

National School Public Relations Association
A Parent's Guide to Standardized Aptitude and Achievement Testing. Arlington, VA: Author, 1978, 15 pages. Price: $.35 (discounts for bulk)

Format: Brief booklet with numerous illustrations and little text

Address: National School Public Relations Assoc.
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Contents:

--What are standardized aptitude and achievement tests? p. 2
--What do "aptitude" and "achievement" actually mean? p. 3
--Why are these tests important? p. 4
--But remember--tests are only one indication, p. 6
--There are two major kinds of tests: criterion referenced and norm referenced, p. 7
--A special word about IQ, p. 9
--What do test scores really tell us? p. 10
--Testing is a valuable educational tool, p. 12
--Parents can help their children do better on tests, p. 13
--And remember, don't read too much into your child's test results, p. 14
--Used properly, aptitude and achievement testing can be a powerful educational tool, p. 15

Table 2. Mini-Textbook Materials on Testing (Cont'd)

McLaughlin, Kenneth F.
Understanding Testing. Purposes and Interpretations for Pupil Development. Washington, D.C. Dept. of HEW, 1964, 24 pages. Price: $.25

Format: Brochure with different articles by staff of USOE's Division of State and Local School Systems, Guidance Counseling and Testing Section

Address: U. S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents
Washington, D.C. 20402

(Out of print)

Contents:

--For Better Understanding, p. 1
--A Few Basic Facts About Tests, p. 2
--How is a Test Built? p. 4
--Types of Tests Available, p. 8
--Uses of Tests, p. 12
--The Cumulative Record, p. 14
--Guidance and Programs of Testing, p. 16
--Administration of the Testing program, p. 19
--Definitions of Commonly Used Measurement Terms, p. 23

Test Committee of the Association of American Publishers, The Role of Tests in Your Schools. New York: Assn. of American Publishers, no date, 16 pages. Price: free

Format: Brief booklet with no illustrations

Address: Association of American Publishers, Inc. One Park Ave.
New York, NY 10016

Contents:

--Norm-referenced Tests, p. 5
--Criterion-referenced Tests, p. 5
--Other Tests, p. 7
--Test Scoring and Reporting, p. 9
--Appropriate Use of Test Results, p. 11

Test Department, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. "Some Things Parents Should Know About Testing," in Test Service Notebook. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., no date, 4 pages. Price: free

Format: Four page flyer in question-and-answer format with three illustrations

Address: Psychological Dorporation
757 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Contents:

--Why do the schools test our children? p. 1
--Why do teachers need to use published tests? p. 1
--What do you mean by norm-referenced? p. 1
--What does standardized mean? p. 1
--How do you get norms from standardization? p. 2
--What do you mean by the pattern of scores? p. 2
--You say norms can be expressed in several ways. What is a percentile rank? page 2
--What is a stanine? p. 2
--But we usually hear about grade equivalents. What are they? p. 3

Table 2. Mini-Textbook Materials on Testing (Cont'd)

Contents: Cont'd)

--Newspapers sometimes write about "scoring at or above the norm." What does scoring at the norm mean? p. 3
--But if a child's reading is "below the norm," that means he is a poor reader, doesn't it? p. 3
--Some parents and teachers claim that most standardized tests are unfair to minority group and inner-city children. Is that true? p. 4
--Are national norms valid for for all children. p. 4
--But aren't there other useful comparisons to be made? p. 4
--Why don't you have tests that tell you whether or not a pupil has learned a skill regardless of what other pupils know? p. 4

are largely the products not of individuals, but of institutions--specifically the Educational Records Bureau, a Guidance Counseling and Testing section of USOE, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), the Test Committee of the Association of American Publishers, and the Test Department of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. In only two of these five documents are individuals responsible for their preparation even identified.

Apparently on the assumption that the authority of the institutions responsible for publication of these documents is self-evident, little information is provided to document the expertise of the individuals or agencies responsible for writing the materials. In content, these materials read like watered down versions of textbooks on educational testing and measurement. Four of the five documents, for example, describe the difference between aptitude and achievement tests. Three of the four are accurately vague on this distinction stating that aptitude tests provide an understanding of or are intended to measure ability, but none comes right out with the facts of the matter, namely that such tests are not necessarily different in nature, but only in intended use (Cronbach, 1970, p. 38).* The NSPRA Parent's Guide, apparently in an effort to provide a simple and straightforward explanation, oversimplifies to the point of inaccuracy:

> Simply stated, aptitude measures what a child has the ability to do, and achievement measures what he/she actually is doing. (p. 3)

Typically these mini-textbook documents discuss testing terms such as criterion-referenced versus norm-referenced, standardization, and various test score scales such as percentiles, stanines and grade equivalents.

*A curious sidelight on the actual, as opposed to the intended, distinction between aptitude and achievement tests is that MENSA--the high IQ society to which Serebriakoff and Langer belong--accepts as proof of high intelligence people's scores on the National Teacher Exam (NTE). The Educational Testing Service which publishes the NTE does not, of course, describe it as an intelligence test but instead as a measure of "academic preparation" and a measure "of one important quality in evaluating the competency of prospective teachers" (Buros, 1978, p. 514).

None of these materials are too clear as to the rationale behind publication. The general message that comes through, however, is that standardized testing is an important activity, and so parents and the public ought to know more about it. Statements as to why standardized testing is important tend to be fairly vague. The NSPRA Parent's Guide states that standardized tests "are all designed to help give a better understanding of each child's skills and abilities" (p. 2) -- again, a somewhat misleading statement. Margaret Corey's Parent's Guide recounts that standardized tests are "designed to give objective evidence that may help parents and schools answer such questions" as "Does a straight 'A' record mean that the student was graded too generously?" (p. 5). The Harcourt Brace pamphlet suggests that schools test children because "the teacher needs to know as much as possible about how [children] differ, in order to be able to match the classroom teaching to the specific needs of children" (p. 1). The USOE publication Understanding Testing attempts "to present essential facts on testing for parents and other interested citizens" because testing is "a valuable tool used by school administrators, supervisors, teachers, counselors, and psychologists" (p. 1).

Though the general message of these materials is that standardized testing is an important and valuable activity, several also offer caveats regarding testing. For example:

> [I]f a test measures many areas that a community does not consider important, then the test should not be used in that community. (Harcourt Brace, p. 4)

> But remember -- tests are only one indication. They measure certain things, but do not measure everything. (NSPRA, p. 6)

> It should always be remembered that there are many reasons why a child might not have scored as well on one particular testing date as he scored on another. . . . [T]o put too much emphasis on any one score is a mistake, and can result in questionable decision making. (Corey, p. 15)

> No one should depend on tests alone in making any important career decision. (McLaughlin, p. 13)

One of the cautions in Understanding Testing inveighs directly against do-it-yourself tests:

> Tests should be safeguarded. The reputable test publisher does not sell his tests to unqualified or unauthorized persons. (McLaughlin, p. 13)

Although a few such caveats regarding test use typically are offered, the predominant message in these mini-textbook materials is that standardized testing is valuable and important, and parents and the public therefore should know more about it. In striking contrast to the do-it-yourself test materials, not a single one of the mini-textbook materials provides even one example of a test item or exercise. The implicit message seems to be that parents and the public should know more about standardized testing, but that the actual business of testing should be left to professionals and proper institutions. Parents can help their children do better on tests (as advised in NSPRA Parent's Guide, p. 13, and Corey's Parents Guide, p. 19) and should feel free to ask questions about testing (suggested in Harcourt Brace pamphlet, p. 4, and Test Committee booklet, p. 15), but parents should rely on educational institutions, test publishers, and test experts to handle the intricacies and details of testing.

IV. Consumer Protection Guides

The third type of public information on testing represents what might be called consumer protection guides on testing. Five documents treated under this heading are described in Table 3.* These documents are somewhat

*Another document, much longer than those reviewed here, which might be considered, at least in part, a consumer's warning concerning testing is Paul Jacobs' Up the IQ. The two booklets from the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation are part of a planned five-booklet series. Future booklets will be entitled: "Standardized Reading Tests: How to Prepare Your Child," "...Their Impact on Curriculum: Do We Test What's Taught or Teach What's Tested?" and "...What are the Alternatives?"

Table 3. Consumer Protection Guides on Testing

Cook, Ann and Meier, Deborah
Standardized Reading Tests: Do They Help or Hurt Your Child? Grand Forks, N.D.: North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, 1977, 16 pages. Price $.50 each ($.40 in bulk orders of 10)

Format: Booklet with numerous examples of items from actual reading tests

Address: North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation Center for Teaching and Learning
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, N.D. 58201

-or-

Ann Cook and Deborah Meier
670 West End Avenue
New York, NY 10025

Contents:

--Are these pictures clear? Do they have "correct answers? p. 1
--Are the "correct answers always the best ones? p. 2
--Do the tests require special knowledge? p. 5
--Do test makers' biases confuse children? p. 9
--Does the language and format confuse some children? p. 11

Cook, Ann, Meier, Deborah, & Miller, Florence
Standardized Reading Tests: What Does that Score Mean? Grand Forks, N.D.: North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, 1979, 16 pages. Price: $.50 each ($.40 in bulk orders of 10 or more).

Format: Question and answer, with illustrations from Peanuts cartoon.

Address: Same as above.

Contents:

--Discussion in question and answer format of weaknesses of grade-equivalent scales and of alternative scales for interpreting test scores.

Damon, J. Parker
"Questions You Should Ask About Your Testing Program," in Houts, Paul (ed.), The Myth of Measurability, New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1977, pp. 348-363. Total book price: $5.95 (paperback)

Format: Chapter in a book

Address: Hart Publishing Company
New York, New York

Contents:

After a brief account of recent controversy over standardized testing, this essay suggests specific questions for parents and teachers to ask in order to help "combat the unnecessary, inappropriate, and harmful use of tests."

--How does proposed standardized testing supplement other forms of assessment and evaluation already in use? p. 352
--How much time will administering the test involve? How much will it cost? p. 352

Table 3. Consumer Protection Guides on Testing (Cont'd)

Contents:

--How will students and parents be prepared for the testing? p. 355
--How will the test results be used and kept? p. 356
--How else might the same information be acquired? p. 357

Patton, Michael Quinn
"Understanding the Gobble-dy-gook: A People's Guide to Standardized Test Results and Statistics," in Perrone, Vito; Cohen, Monroe; and Martin, Lucy (eds), Testing and Evaluation: New Views, Washington, D.C.: Assn. for Childhood Education International, 1975 pp. 18-26. Total book price: $2.50

Format: Article in booklet, with a few illustrations and examples

Address: Association for Childhood Education International
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Contents:

Article does not discuss different types or uses of standardized tests. Focuses on "inadequacies and tricks" of statistics and standardized testing. Concludes: "Given the state of the art, standardized tests are no substitute for your own carefully considered observations about children you personally know."

Ryan, Charlotte
The Testing Maze, Chicago, Ill.: National PTA, 1979 20 pp.
Price: $2.00

Format: Illustrated booklet

Address: National PTA
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, Ill. 60611

Contents:

What Is Standardized Testing? p. 1
Other Standardized Tests p. 2
How Accurate Are Test Scores Likely to Be? p. 2
What Can Standardized Test Scores Tell Us? p. 4
The Dilemmas of Standardized Testing p. 5
IQ Tests Are Standardized Tests p. 7
Every Child in a Bell-Shaped Curve p. 8
What About the SATs? p. 9
The Competency Movement p. 11
Basic Skills: The New Educational Goal p. 11
What Competencies are Minimum? p. 12
What Is Fair? p. 14
What Does Competency Testing Cost? p. 15
What Forecast for Education? p. 15
What to Look For in Your School's Testing Program p. 16
Not All Children Mature at the Same Rate p. 16 Notes p. 18
A Parents' Guide Through the Testing Maze p. 19 Reading List p. 20

more diverse than those reviewed under the previous two headings. The unifying characteristic of them is that each is written by someone who obviously is fairly skeptical of standardized testing practices. In this respect the consumer protection guides on testing are at the opposite end of the spectrum of views on testing as the do-it-yourself test authors.

Oddly enough, however, they have several features common with the do-it-yourself test materials. Like Serebriakoff and Langer, their authors seem to feel that schools do not provide enough information to parents on the tests which schools give to their children. However, unlike the two Mensa members who want schools to give parents their children's IQ scores, authors of these consumer protection guides advocate that parents and the public should have access to original test contents. For example, Damon advises that one of the questions you should ask about your testing program is "Will parents or students be able to see the test beforehand?" (p. 302). In their first booklet, Cook and Meier provide numerous examples of items from actual standardized reading tests in order to demonstrate how they can be ambiguous and misleading to children who do not approach them in the same manner as the adult who wrote the items. Patton also gives examples of real test items in order to show how they can have more than one right answer (p. 25). Ryan provides numerous examples of test items throughout The Testing Maze. These test critics all give examples of items at least in part to demonstrate that items may not really be relevant to what the testmakers purport them to measure.

Like the do-it-yourself test authors, these critics offer real examples of items from actual tests. Note, however, that they do so with a very different goal in mind. They provide examples not so that parents can test their own children, but so that parents will view standardized tests more skeptically.

Who are these skeptics? Generally, the credentials of the authors of these test consumer cautions are quite different than those of other types of test information authors. Cook and Meier are not identified beyond their apparent affiliation with the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation. Damon is identified as an elementary school principal with fifteen years of teaching and administration experience, and as a specialist in reading and language. Patton is identified as an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota. Ryan is a member of the National PTA's Publications Committee and past president of the Massachusetts PTA. In contrast to the authors of both the do-it-yourself test documents and the mini-textbook materials, these skeptics of testing all are educators.

Why are these educators opposed to testing? In general, they seem concerned because they feel, as do the authors of the mini-textbook materials, that standardized testing is on the increase. As Patton puts it: "standardized testing now pervades our lives" (p. 26). In Reading Tests: Do They Help or Hurt, Cook and Meier suggest that increasing use of standardized tests is having several unfortunate effects:

1. They often determine children's future class placement and classification (slow, bright).

2. They put pressure on teachers to spend large portions of time coaching children for the tests -- trying to outwit the test makers.

3. They affect the curriculum, the skills, and the values of the school, since teachers will often shape the school day to fit the tests, not the children.

4. Large sums of money are given to schools to improve their reading programs. The success of these programs is often determined by test scores.

5. Children judge themselves by how they do on the tests. They assume that test questions are what reading "is all about."

6. Parents, not having seen the tests, often judge their children by their test scores, too. (p. 16)

Damon expresses concern for the costs of standardized testing and for the fact that better evaluative information on students and schools may be available from other sources; for example, teachers' recommendations, report cards, and parent-teacher conferences (p. 359). Patton worries about misunderstanding of several characteristics of tests:

> Norms provide information about how children from some comparison group actually performed on a particular test, not how they ought to have performed. . . . For many reasons all tests involve some measurement error. . . . tests themselves can be biased and invalid. (pp. 19, 22, 24)

Occasionally the test critics' explanations lapse into exposes of the obvious: "The tests are designed so that about half of the children score 'below average'" (Patton, p. 20). Also, on some technical issues, the test critics' explanations can be misleading. Ryan, for example, in explaining the validity of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and high school grades in predicting college grades states:

> The best median coefficient for SAT scores and high school grades combined is .56 -- which means that just over 30 percent of the students perform as predicted. (Ryan, 1979, p. 10)

Charlotte Ryan's The Testing Maze: An Evaluation of Standardized Testing in America, prepared and published by the National PTA in 1979, is easily the most ambitious, and the lengthiest, of the consumer protection guides. It describes different types of standardized tests such as norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, IQ, and competency tests, and gives some brief information on specific tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the National

Assessment of Educational Progress. In her description of the testing maze, Ryan suggests that standardized testing can serve some useful purposes, for example:

> • Because the tests offer such an easy way of comparing large numbers of students, school systems generally have come to look upon standardized tests as a way in which they may give an accounting of their stewardship to the public. . . .
>
> • Standardized test scores across a school system can give curriculum planners for that system some suggestions of curriculum needs, by comparing local instruction against the national norms. . . .
>
> • A series of tests can lay out a sequence of skills by grade levels, which is helpful in building curriculum devoted to the development of reading or mathematical skills. . . .
>
> • Standardized-test scores can locate potential problem areas among large group of students. . . .
>
> • Because of the near universality of their use, standardized tests are credited with raising the level of education across the country -- particularly for minorities -- by defining a set of common learnings. . . . (pp. 5-6)

On balance, however, Ryan's booklet focuses more on the limitations of standardized testing than on its potential:

> • The assumptions underlying many test items may be foreign to a child's thinking and experience. . . .
>
> • The wording of many test questions is ambiguous. . . .
>
> • Another major problem for children is that many items intended to test a particular skill also require special knowledge. . . .
>
> • The tests all too frequently exhibit insensitivity to the feelings of non-Caucasian children -- an insensitivity that affects the self-esteem of the children and thus their learning progress. . . .

> • The objectives of standardized testing are generally limited to content of facts, definitions and their applications, and events in various areas of language, mathematics, science, and social studies. . . .
>
> • The tests can tell us little about the child's ability to learn, to analyze, or to reason -- and nothing of the child's judgment, originality, imagination, or creativity. Nor do the tests tell us how much a child knows about any given subject. Rather, tests simply skim the surface of learning.
>
> • Standardized tests are of no use in diagnosing individual student needs. . . .
>
> • There are wide margins for error in the individual scores themselves. . . . (pp. 2-4)

The test critics' remedy to the problems of standardized testing, unlike those of the psychologist authors of the do-it-yourself tests and of the institutional authorities responsible for the mini-textbook materials, is not public reliance on their own or anyone else's supposed expertise. While the mini-textbooks call for parents' questions, the skeptics call for their action:

> We think it's about time parents knew how these tests worked. It's time for YOU to judge for yourself what it means to be able to read. . . . We think it's TIME that parents decide whether such tests are what schools should use to judge children (Cook and Meier, p. 17)
>
> The best way to combat the unnecessary, inappropriate and harmful use of tests is for educators and parents together to challenge some of the long-held assumptions about testing. (Damon, p. 363)
>
> If you are to properly interpret [a test] , you must find out whether or not you feel the test questions are valid and meaningful. One good way to do so is to ask students who took the test what they meant when they answered the questions. (Patton, p. 25)
>
> Ask to see the tests. Do they have a geographical, cultural, sexual, or racial bias? Are the questions clear? Do the questions require special knowledge? Are the questions straightforward, and not designed to trick students rather than test them honestly about what they have been taught? (Ryan, p. 19)

Such exhortation, of course, reflects a very different world view than those of either the mini-textbook authors or the do-it-yourself test writers. In contrast to the mini-textbook authors, these skeptics say to parents and the public: don't just rely on supposed experts, judge the quality of the tests for yourselves. Such calls doubtlessly would be viewed by Serebriakoff as a product of false egalitarianism, but the irony here is that Serebriakoff himself began his do-it-yourself test book with a critique of prevailing authorities' policy of non-disclosure of test information.

V. Conclusion

Several stripes of observers are concerned with getting more information on testing into the hands of parents and the public. Their motivations for doing so, however, are markedly different. The do-it-yourself test authors would put the tools of "scientific" psychology into the public's hands--though according to prevailing standards of psychology their works seem more like astrology or scientism, than real science. The mini-textbook authors would make the public into mini-experts on educational testing, apparently in the belief that since testing is an important and valuable activity, people should know more about it. The consumer protection advocates, on the other hand, believe that parents and the public should know more about standardized testing not simply for the sake of their own enlightenment, but so that they can judge for themselves the quality of standardized testing programs, and maybe even take action to reduce wasteful testing in the schools.

In sum, we have reviewed three very different sorts of materials under the rubric of information on testing for parents and the public. The different types appear generally to be written by different sorts of people, to communicate very different messages about standardized testing and to be associated

with very different social ideologies.

The contrasts between these types of materials suggests why the CIC has been having such a difficult time getting its public pamphlet on testing prepared. Two drafts of the pamphlet have already been prepared and discarded and a third is now in the works. The second and third efforts have been made through the National Institute of Education. Such delays and false starts might, of course, be attributed simply to the infamous sloth of federal bureaucracies. For example, it took HEW a full year simply to produce a report on its special Conference on Achievement Testing and Basic Skills, held in March 1978.*

With respect to the would-be publication on testing, more than simple sloth seems to be involved. After all, the USOE already has produced one of the mini-textbook materials on testing reviewed here: McLaughlin's Understanding Testing, originally printed in 1960, and reprinted in 1962, 1963, and 1964. Rather, it seems as if federal officials are caught in a dilemma over which message regarding testing they ought to communicate. The first draft booklet prepared for the CIC was of the consumer protection variety of information. The second draft was of the mini-textbook variety. However, if we look at the exact wording of the 1977 CIC survey, as a result of which these drafts were solicited, we find that the pamphlet title in which the public expressed interest sounds rather like one of the do-it-yourself test books. The survey wording was:

> Testing your Child's IQ 054E, 55¢, 16 pp., 1977. What a parent should know about standardized tests for intelligence, aptitude and achievement. (Bruskin, 1977)

The title is almost exactly the same as Serebriakoff and Langer's Test Your

* The report, entitled The National Conference on Achievement Testing and Basic Skills, March 1-3, 1978, was dated February 1979.

Child's IQ. It is doubtless not an accident, after all, that of the various sorts of information on testing reviewed in this paper, the only type to be published as a commercial venture is the do-it-yourself test variety. Yet the blurb on the CIC survey item suggests that the government publication will be more like the mini-textbook publications, or maybe even like the consumer protection guides on testing. So the problem faced by officials trying to prepare a booklet on testing for the CIC may not be simply a matter of telling the public what it wants to know, but telling it what it should know. It is a minor example of that long-standing dilemma of democratic government -- balancing needs for the government both to follow and to lead public opinion. On such a dilemma consumer surveys hold little power of illumination.

REFERENCE NOTE

Note 1

The number of articles on particular topics listed in the Reader's Guide is an imperfect indicator of public interest in those topics for several reasons. First is the simple reason that topic headings under which articles are classified are not completely stable. In fact, the heading "Educational Tests and Measurements" did not actually appear until the volume which spanned the 1957-59 period. Thus for prior years we have counted the number of entries listed under "Educational Measurements." Also, changes in the number of articles in "periodicals of general interest" (Preface, Reader's Guide, Feb. 1979, Vol. 78, No. 21) may reflect not just changes in relative interest in a particular topic, but may more broadly mirror overall changes in the number of articles on all topics. In this regard, we should note that the total number of pages in the Reader's Guide increased slightly in the time period considered while the number of entries per page appears roughly constant.

Inconsistency in the indexing system and overlap are possible sources of both omission and redundancy. For example, in some years, the reader is referred to "tests and scales" as the principal reference guide for educational tests. Also, in some years, the reader is referred to "Ability Tests" from "Intelligence Tests." Our tabulation excludes articles listed under such secondary headings.

One further problem is that the domain of literature covered by the Guide changes periodically. Every five years, the publishers of the Guide distribute a list of suggested journals to be indexed and the consensus of opinion determines what journals are indexed for the next five years. This method results in some inconsistency in periodicals covered in different time periods.

As a result of such complications, the listings in Reader's Guide provides, as we said, no more than a crude index of interest in particular topics.

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